



Department
for Education

Open standards for documents

Implementation plan

March 2015

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Context

In July 2014, Government Digital Services (GDS) announced plans to implement open document standards across government departments.

They established that the default standards and formats would be:

- for publishing editable documents and sharing documents across the public sector:
 - open document formats for Office applications (ODF 1.2)
- For publishing read only documents
 - portable document format (PDF/A)
 - hypertext markup language – 5th revision (HTML5)

This implementation plan sets out how the Department for Education (DfE) and its agencies will adopt these standards and formats.

Implementing the change

Implementing open document standards across DfE will have wide ranging-implications on the way we currently work. DfE will take a phased approach to rolling out and delivering the changes by taking an iterative and user-centred approach.

We will update this plan iteratively in response to wider strategic and technological developments.

We will ensure that whatever solution we choose will meet the needs of all our users.

An iterative and user centred approach

During early 2015 we initiated a continuous cycle of user research to help inform our implementation plans and better understand the full impact of the changes on our:

- external and internal users
- organisational culture such as working practices and business processes
- productivity tools, systems and applications

We believe that by taking a user-centred approach it will enable DfE to:

- review and revise existing business processes
- ensure that the identified software solution will support user needs
- align the move to open standards with the DfE IT (and other) strategies
- determine the best timelines for implementation, reducing the impact on our users

Challenges and considerations

We have identified a number of challenges and considerations that we will investigate and address as appropriate during the implementation phases.

Challenges

- cost of change: the requirement to integrate the use of open document format (ODF) into business applications may be costly for some of our legacy applications – we will mitigate this by incorporating changes into the technology refresh lifecycle
- a large proportion of our external users are from local authorities and schools, who have indicated that they will have can't access ODFs –. we will mitigate this by focusing on a user-centre approach and look at holistic solutions

Considerations

- technology alternatives: we will conduct an ongoing review of tools and services in the marketplace to ensure our users have the solutions that best meets their needs.
- training: we will review and redesign all training packages to emphasise digital by default processes and use of open formats (ODF and PDF/A)

Delivery approach

Phase 1: Publishing documents on GOV.UK

By 31 March 2015, DfE will ensure that:

- all new publications on GOV.UK comply with or are converted to open standards
- all new PDF publications on GOV.UK are in PDF/A format
- all historical documents are made available in open formats on request
- any publications produced on our behalf by 3rd party suppliers will conform to the standards

Since DfE transitioned to GOV.UK all our viewable corporate and workforce guidance content has been published in HTML 5 format.

When we publish content on GOV.UK we will consider HTML 5 the default format, and only publish in PDF/A and or ODF where necessary – reducing our reliance on document attachments.

Phase 2: Office productivity tools and ODF

Our ambition is to complete the rollout of the appropriate solution by December 2015.

Alignment with planned technology updates

We are embarking on an IT modernisation programme of the DfE technology capabilities and intend to align our choice, procurement and installation of compliant software with planned technology updates. This will enable longer-term cost reductions that will better meet our users' needs through improved resilience, agility and flexibility.

The choice of software to enable DfE to save and open documents in ODF will depend on the approvals of business case and procurement timelines for the modernisation programme. We will set the save function on the chosen solution to default to open document format ODF1.2.

Researching user needs:

The ODF strategy will enable DfE to take a big step forward in the implementation of open standards. However, we recognise that:

- the move to open document standards will involve a change in the way we do business
- our chosen solution may not meet all our users' needs

For this reason, we will be engaging early with business change and engagement teams who specialise in delivering change using the See IT, Get IT and Use IT method.

This is a staged process of informing people of the change. It includes:

- assessing the cultural impact
- reviewing existing business processes
- engaging key stakeholders
- developing new guidance
- developing new training modules
- communicating the change and the associated benefits
- embedding new ways of working

For those users whose needs are not met, we will explore alternatives and feed this into our cycle of user research to find the most appropriate solution(s).

Phase 3 – open document formats for integrated tools and applications

In early 2015 DfE started a landscape review of all our applications and their compatibility with ODF. Our ambition is to complete this by summer 2015.

On a rolling basis, where the opportunity arises, we will decommission or update our applications within the natural lifecycle – avoiding unnecessary expenditure to support the move to ODF.



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